

Whose idea was it anyway?

The Elitist explanation for BokoHaram

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Abstract—Numerous attempts have been made to theorize the insecurity bedeviling the Nigerian State. Theories that explain Boko Haram as a resurgent historical force have mostly done so by contextualizing the conflict in the light of the 19th century Jihads. This paper presents an alternative theory, one championed by the generation of administrators first called the 'Northern Elites'. This theory contextualizes the insurgency in light of decolonization and the subsequent dissolution of the Northern Region and its Native Authorities.

Keywords-Boko Haram, Terrorism, Northern Nigeria; Field Theory; Bourdieu; Digital Culture

INTRODUCTION

In framing the Boko Haram insurgency, researches are divided among internal theorists who see the conflict as a domestic conflict within the Nigerian state (Osumah, 2013) and external theorists who view it in the light of Global Jihad (Onapajo, 2012). Internal theorists could be further divided into factor theorists who attempt to contextualize the conflict in the light of socio economic and political factors (Agbiboa, 2013) and Historical theorists who view the conflict in historical terms. These historical theories have mostly attempted to trace the origins of the insurgency to the 19th century jihads (Celso, 015) or the rise of Islamic reform movements like Izala (Brigaglia, 2015).

As suggested by Alozieuwa(2012), while each of these theories offers a degree of insight into the Boko Haram phenomenon, none has adequately explained it and while most of the theories accept that the insurgency had evolved and continues to evolve the theories have mostly failed to explain the forces behind its evolution.

This paper presents a derivative historical model based on the Northern Nigeria Social Media survey. The survey interviewed individuals who qualified for the Elite class based on Abdullahi (2017) and then contextualized the insurgency based on the themes developed there from. The data was then analysed using the Social Field theory of Pierre Bourdieu (Hilgers and Mangez, 2014) and the Tawaye theory of Murray Last (Last, 2009).

While the themes developed also attempt to draw parallels between the Boko Haram insurgency and other historical movements, a novel generalization has also evolved which looked at the successes of the defunct Northern Nigerian Protectorate, the Federation of Nigeria and contrasts those with the seeming decline of the Nigerian Republic.

BACKGROUND

Field theory

Bourdieu's theory of social fields brings together the concepts of capital, habitus and field (Hilgers and Mangez, 2014). It conceptualizes the relations between social actors and social institutions in terms of power and dominance where the primary commodity is capital. Classes formed along the boundaries of capital and habitus form a complex web of competition and alliances as actors seek to improve their standing within the field. According to Bourdieu, the dominant players or incumbents favor the stabilization of a social field by discouraging rapid changes and encouraging the establishment of rules and norms, while the insurgents or non dominant players who wish to gain political capital would encourage destructive changes.

Tawaye and Central Sudan

A number of researchers have drawn parallels between bokoharam and other Islamic reform movements in the Sahel. However only a few have extended the problem in a conceptual manner to cover other historical insurgencies in the central Sudan.

Last (2009) describes this scholarly contradiction and expanded upon it in Last (2013). The prevalence insurgencies within the Sokoto Caliphate has been shown to have affected early European scholars who erroneously described it as a "Loose confederation or a weak collection of states(Paden, 1981)

Insurgencies have also been blamed or the demise of some of the Hausa sultanates and even the defeat of Songhai Empire after the battle of Tondibi (Okene and Ahmad, 2011)

It can thus be seen that insurgencies or attempt at insurgency are not alien to Northern Nigeria. In fact, it could be argued that insurgency or Tawaye is the norm. This is in tandem with the sociological theory of fields which views insurgency as an attempt by new actors to alter the balance of power in their own interest. The use of religion for such insurgencies is also not new to Northern Nigeria.

The Ningi, rebellion, the rise of the Isawa and the rise of Mahadism are some of the few cases highlighted by Last (2013). Last (2009) suggested that Tawaye usually takes four stages. The first witnesses the emergence of a religious scholar, the second is defined by a growth in the followership of this scholar and in the third, a skirmish with the authority and then finally all out conflict (Last, 2009).

In Contextualizing BokoHaram as a Tawaye like all those before it (Sokoto Jihad, Ali Yaji etc) its violent and dogmatic history might elude scholars to disregard it as a historical force capable of state formation. However, as Last(2013) pointed out, such inner contradictions were also very

evident in the Fulani Jihadis of the 19th century. When a tawaye group does become successful, it is often faced with the problem of how best to manage its success and how best to deal with an inevitable clash between operational reality and intellectual idealism. Last suggested that the Sokoto Caliphate did so by allowing different Fulani groups (Emirates) to evolve different internal measures to settle these problems.

THE STUDY

Participants of the Northern Nigerian Social Media Survey which satisfied the all factor high class definition of Abdullahi (2017) were contacted . The class distinction methodology of Abdullahi (2017) was employed in selecting the participants. 11 Participants among them 3 former federal permanent secretaries, 3 district heads in the Kano Emirate Council, 3 former directors in the federal civil service and 2 former permanent secretaries in the Kano and Jigawa State civil service each. Each of the 9 participants fitted the all factor high class definition of Abdullahi (2017). The rationale behind focusing on this class is that they were mostly well trained and educated administrators with high social and political capital (Abdullahi, 2017).

The participants were interviewed after meeting with the first author . A normal inductive approach was used to draw themes from the data. The data was collected from September 2017 to March 2018. The interviews were centered around the participant's views about the Boko Haram Insurgency, its causes and its impact. The data was framed around the field theory of Pierre Bourdieu.

FINDINGS

An Iterative Inductive approach was used to analyze the interviews of participants in order to develop themes from the Data. The derived themes include:

Causes of the Insurgency

“Bokoharam is a monument to the vanity of incompetent soldiers who thought they could manage a complex state by issuing decrees “

The above quote was a reply from a participant when asked to summarize the Boko Haram insurgency. Common themes developed from the responses of our participants centred around the Nigerian Independence of 1960, the Local Government Reforms from 1966-1979 and the creations of States from the Northern Region (1967- 1996).

Destabilisation of the the Field

Premature Independence- The Rapid Change Theory

“Whose idea was it anyway? our accelerated march to independence created a situation whereby young bureaucrats suddenly realized they had power, which they started to abuse willingly, ”

The Nigerian Independence of 1960 was vigorously criticized by the participants. The view that Nigeria was not ready for Independence in 1960 has been popular in Northern Nigeria since the 1960s, but some of the participants blamed it for an interruption in Nigeria's institutional growth. The view of the participants is that this interruption resulted in a stagnation of institutional growth and made the nation's structures incapable of coping with the murders of January 1966. These murders resulted in a chain of events that led to the eventual dissolution of the Northern Region and the local government reforms which then created a chronic absence of the state, in the vacuum, groups such as Bokoharam emerged to challenge the legitimacy of the State

This view that Nigeria's Independence came before its time has for long been a feature within certain social circles in Northern Nigeria. The Kano riots of 1953 were triggered by an attack on the Northern delegation at Lagos after the North rejected the motion for independence. Independence is now viewed as the '*beginning of the problem*' for the North, even while it could be seen as the nostalgia of a social class which has found itself loosing political capital to other emerging actors.

Destructive Competition – Dissolution of the Native Authorities

“Maitatsine came in the time of the NA, but he could not launch an insurgency, why was it that he was able to do that after the local government reforms”

The local government reforms which dismantled the native authorities as the local governments of the North and replaced them with local government councils was seen to have created an institutional vacuum. This lack of government presence in some of the most remote areas of the North allowed for the rise of groups which then filled the void.

Destructive Changes- State Creation

“The crisis in Zamfara is not surprising, it is an artificial entity, the only state that did not have the capital of a NA before the destruction of the region”

While not seen as a direct cause of insurgency and insecurity, the creation of states was seen to have

further exacerbated the problem of institutional absence. According to the participants, it allowed for the rise of incompetent administrators and political leaders who accelerated the decline of social order and destroyed most the social and institutional structures that prevented chaos.

Containing the Insurgency -Stabilizing the Field

“We need to restore the same stabilizing influence which the old Northern region exercised over Nigeria”

The above quote has a strange resemblance to the speech made by Sir Ahmadu Bello to the Minority Commission of Inquiry. In Bourdieu's social field theory, stable fields favor dominant actors who maintain a healthy balance of political capital among the principal players. While at a disadvantage compared to their fore father's, this social class, as players possibly still see themselves in a dominant position and so view the stabilization of the field favourably.

Enforcing dominance- A Military solution

Participants highlighted a military solution as the only to cripple the BokoHaram insurgency in the short run, this view while not popular with some observers does resemble the hard line approach to Tawaye which H.R. Johnston has alluded to when he was resident of the Kano province (Carolyn, 2010).

The participants where however not confident that the Nigeria Military could deliver the military victory on its own and where more confident in the use of mercenaries to destroy the insurgency

Restoring the Rules of the Game- Political Reorganization

Calls for a political reorganization that will isolate and deprive disadvantaged areas of the power to produce high ranking executives is a prominent theme in the responses of the participants. The example of Zamfara state which has one of the lowest literacy rates is often cited. The logic given by some participants is that a chronically uninformed society could not reasonably perform well as an electorate.

Another reason for reorganization often suggested is that of local governance. Most of the participants suggested a variation of the Native Authority system with varying degrees of democratic oversight. Basic Education is a recurring theme in the responses of the participants, most of them have hinted that an over reliance on tertiary education by the Nation's education policy was harming the society by making the problem a trans-generational one.

By Such reorganizations, the dominant players in a social field could be hoping to restore some the

rules which maintained a healthy level of competition in the system.

POWER HABITUS AND NORTHERN NIGERIA

The absence of strong institutions is a prominent theme in the responses of the participants, but viewing this in light of the Native authority system, which confined local political power to a certain class, those institutions were no doubt operating within the interests of a few actors (incumbents) within the larger society (field)

The suggestion that the restoration of all or part of this system would prevent a recurrence of the insurgency is in line with Bourdieu's theory of social field. The participants being from the same class and sharing similar habits see the use of religion by a rising class of mostly mid-eastern educated block who threaten to appropriate political capital as disadvantageous. Their responses also agree with Bourdieu as they see this religion-exploiting class as one in need of disciplinary intervention.

Bokoharam could then be seen as a challenge to the establishment by a class of Arabic educated elite, who have either found themselves educationally disadvantaged or tap into a popular disillusionment in the educationally disadvantaged.

Containing Tawaye

As Table1 shows, the republican period has indeed witnessed an increasing frequency of religious riots and uprisings which could be classified as Tawaye. The period from 1970 to the 2000s has particularly seen a steep rise in such riots. While a number of theorists have presented alternative explanations for this such as competition for scarce resource, increase in population etc A closer inspection in the pattern of the riots shows areas of significant religious fluidity (Plateau, Taraba, Bornu) and those that lack remnants of established Native Authority structures (Zamfara) are particularly prone to violence. Such tolerance as witnessed by the early community of Yunfa in Gobir which allowed Dan Fodios followership to flourish has been an integral feature of Tawaye.

TABLE1. MAJOR POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Year	Political and Religious Violence in Northern Nigeria		
	<i>Riot / Uprising</i>	<i>Cause</i>	<i>Lives Lost</i>
	Protectorate Period		
1906	Satiru Uprising		

1948	Tafawa Balewa Riots		
	Federation/Self Government Period		
1953	1953 Kano anti independence riots		
1960	September 1960 ambush of NPC in Yandev Gboko and Tiv division		
1964	Feb and Nov 18 1964 Tiv riots	It further appears from the nature of the disturbances that the riotous had changed from civil disobedience to armed guerrilla warfare with a direct military aim to the overthrow of the state. Under the circumstances it was decided to suspend the maintenance of order in the State as it was clear that the riotous had degenerated into a military action.	
1966	Anti Coup riots		
	Post Regional Period		
1980	December 190 Kano Matitastine Riot attempted in 1945		
1982	Bulumkuttu maitatsine riot maiduguri		3000
1982	Fagge church riot, Kano		
1984	Yola Musa Mekanike maitastine riot		1000
1985	April 1985 Gombe musa makanike maitatsine riots		
1987	Kafanchan riot		
1991	Reinhard Bonnke riot		
1992	Jalingo Riots		
1992	Zangon Kataf market relocation Riots		
2000	Kaduna shariah riots 21 feb-Mar 23		
2001	Miktar muhammaed appointment Jos riots – 7- 17 september 2001		1000 + 50,00 displaced
2002	Isioma Daniel thisday riot		1000
2004	Yelwa Shendam massacre Feb		
2004	Kano yelwa shendam reprials killings May		
2006	Danish Cartoon riots Maiduguro		
2008	Jos riots election riots Nov 28-29		3000
2009	Boko Haram Uprising Kan-Maidugiri		
2010	Jos and pankshin riots 7 Januar		
2010	Jos riots Dogo-Nahawa Mar 7		
2011	Elections riots		
2015	Zaria Shiite massacre		

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In this model, the question then arises as to why BokoHaram was marginally successful in challenging the Nigerian State when compared with Maitasine and other variations of Tawaye. This is perhaps explained when one considers the fact that the right to belief is enshrined in the constitution of Nigeria, and that un-orthodoxy no matter how deviant from the norm, is in no way illegal. While extra judicial measures could have been invoked in the pre-republican era, the severely curtailed powers of the native authority institutions can only act within the confines of these laws which guaranty the right of belief. But even more significant is the process by which the laws of the republic have allowed for the emergence of disengaged communities.

Under the Northern Region, taxes (Jangalai and Haraji) and other institutional guidelines would have made it impossible for a local scholar to build a remote community that can be suitably disengaged from the government. The absence of these structures has now made it possible for these scholars to build such communities and even impose their own laws, all of which could be suitably done within the safety of Nigeria's modern day norms.

TABLEII. POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS TAWAYE

Period	Tawaye in Northern Nigeria	
	Tawaye	Success/Impact
Pre 17 th Century	Islam	Successful- led to the establishment of the Hausa Sultanates
	Kanemi So	Successful- led to the NGazargamu period
18 th Century	Fulani Jihads	Marginally successful- Overthrew several Hausa Sultanates
19 th Century	Isawa	Not Successful
	Mahadism	Defeated
	Rabeh' Insugency	Almost successful- led to the Yerwa period ater colonial intervention
	Ningi Rebellion	Formation of the Ningi state
1900s	Mahadism	Not Successful

1940s	Reformed Tijjaniyya	Evolved
1970s	Salafi sahwa	Not Successful
-		
2000s		
	Quranism (maitasine)	Not Successful
	Shi'ism	Not Successful
	Pentecostal Extremism	Not Successful
2000s	Bokoharam	On going
	Pentecostal Extremism	On going
	Shiism	On going (evolving)

CONCLUSION

This paper challenges the conceptions of previous theories that religious extremism or some form of economic devices were generally or solely responsible for the rise of BokoHaram. We have argued that BokoHaram was a natural attempt by a politically disadvantageous class to appropriate religious authority and use it to claim political power, and that historical Tawaye in the Sahel region has always witnessed such attempts.

The success of BokoHaram in challenging the Nigerian state did not come from its own ingenuity but from the destruction of political institutions that have through the centuries served the purpose of containing attempts at such Tawaye. The suggestion being that, the instruments of Indirect rule which became the Native Authorities of Northern Nigeria were not preserved by Lugard as a cost cutting measure, but that the institutions were inherently necessary to maintaining order in the region.

We suggest therefore, that in looking for a historical context to the insurgency, most scholars are ignoring a historical pattern of insurgent actions (Tawaye) which are not linked to any one religion or dogma, and that the states that managed to successfully contain this pattern (Protectorate of NN, Pre Republican Nigeria as opposed to Kanem, Bornu, Habe Sultanates) are those that adopted efficient administrative systems that extended central control to the local level.

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